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NOVA SCOTIA Government of Nova Scotia

More University Funding/Stable Tuition Fees Requested

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)
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The Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education is asking government to increase funding, and universities to hold tuition increases to a minimum. The council's report, now being considered by Cabinet, also recommends how funding should be shared, based on program costs, enrolments and unique circumstances at each university.

Although funding decisions are still being finalized, Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison says he wants universities, students and faculty to know what council is recommending. After a preliminary review of the report, the minister said Cabinet supports the report's direction.

"Nova Scotian universities contribute tremendously to our economic prosperity, and to our quality of life. We must increase our investment in them accordingly," Mr. Harrison said. "At the same time, a university education must be affordable for students. We support the council's recommendation that universities make every effort to stabilize tuition fees."

Council chair Bob Shaw said the report recommends a $24 million increase in university operating funds, as quickly as the province's financial situation will allow.

"We don't expect this to happen all at once, but we want to begin moving in the right direction this year," Mr. Shaw said. "As the economy keeps improving, we would welcome a government commitment to the $24 million over the next few years."

The report also recommends a new formula to allocate funding among universities. Replacing a formula now 10-years-old, the new formula considers relative program costs, enrolments and research activity. Special grants are also recommended to address costs relating to university size, location, French education, and high part-time enrolments. Restricted grants would remain for alterations, renovations, libraries and equipment.

Mr. Harrison thanked university administrators, faculty and students for working with the council on the new formula for the past two years. "The council received good advice, every step of the way."

Based on new funding levels, most universities would see significant funding increases. All would receive at least the level of funding they have now. Mr. Harrison says final budget decisions will be shared as soon as possible, so universities can set tuition levels and plan for the upcoming year.

NOTE: The following is intended for use by broadcast media.

Help could be just around the corner for Nova Scotia's universities.

In a report released today, the Council on Higher Education recommends government increase funding by 24-million-dollars over the next few years as the province's financial situation allows. It also recommends universities keep tuition increases to a minimum and highlights the need for a new formula to distribute money among schools.

Education Minister Robbie Harrison says cabinet is considering the recommendations -- and there is support for the report's direction.

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